Littleton Denver and Rio Grande Western Depot
2199 West Littleton Boulevard
Littleton
Arapahoe County
Colorado

HABS No. CO-46

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LITTLETON DENVER AND RIO GRANDE WESTERN DEPOT

Location: 2199 West Littleton Boulevard, Littleton, Arapahoe County, Colorado. UTM: 13/498860/4384670.

Present Owner: Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company, 1515 Arapahoe Street, Denver, Colorado.

Present Use: Storage (awaiting relocation).

Significance: Architecturally, the D & RGW Depot is characteristic of the railroad style of building developed in the Victorian Age. It is one of the oldest railroad depots in Colorado and one of the few surviving small stone depots in the state. It is closely tied with the development of Littleton and linked to the history of the D & RGW Railroad.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: circa 1875 (The Report to the Stockholders of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company for the Year 1880 lists "1 stone depot" in Littleton. The stockholders report for the year 1873 lists a frame depot in Littleton, and reports for the intervening years do not exist. An almost identical stone depot in nearby Castle Rock is thought to have been constructed in 1875.)

2. Architect: Unknown

3. Original and subsequent owners: Reference to existing lease to the land upon which the structure stands is in the Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Arapahoe County, Littleton, Colorado.

   1876 State Enabling Act, August 2, 1876, recorded in the Colorado Revised Statutes, Book No. 1, Section 7. Grants Sections 16 and 36 of each township to the state for "school sections."

   1883 Right-of-way. (This is not a conveyance but an easement). Recorded August 2, 1883, formerly in Book 194 Page 464, presently Book A50, pages 117 and 118. State Board of Land Commissioners to The Denver and Rio Grande Railway Co.

4. Builder: Unknown (may have been The Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company).

5. Original plans and construction: No plans for the original construction exist. However, plans dated December 28-31, 1906, detailing additions and modifications, are available. From these, it seems that the original construction included the rectangular stone building only. It was divided into three rooms: one large room on the north and two small rooms on the south. The structural material, rhyolite, was quarried in nearby Castle Rock and was a popular building stone in Colorado in the late 19th century.

6. Alterations and additions: The 1906 plans provided for the construction of the baggage room north of the original stone building and an open breezway, evidentally for baggage handling, connecting the two buildings. They also detailed the addition of the bay on the west side of the stone structure, some interior remodeling, and the replacement of some doors and windows. Later modifications included the 1942 enclosure of the breezeway and the addition of the lean-to on the east side of the stone building, which houses two lavatories. The interior also appears to have been remodeled a second time. In addition, the doorways and all but two of the window openings in the stone building have been made smaller, and another small window has been added on the south side to provide a better view of the track to the south.

B. Historical Context:

Littleton, Colorado was a small agricultural community at the time the first railroad (D & RG) came through it in 1871. It was named for Richard S. Little, who settled there in 1860. Although it had been known for several years as "Littleton," the name did not become official until June 3, 1872, when the town was platted. The D & RG had officially opened for business on January 1st of that year. The first stretch of their road ran from Denver to Colorado Springs. Littleton just happened to be on the way.

The D & RG was the third railroad in Colorado. Its founder, William Jackson Palmer, envisioned a north-south railroad linking Denver and El Paso and eventually continuing to Mexico City. Since Colorado was at that time sparsely settled, his plans were based on his faith in the future possibilities of the area's untapped agricultural and mineral resources.

Part of Palmer's plan involved the founding of a fashionable resort near the mineral springs around Colorado City. The first of Palmer's dreams were realized in 1871 when the

Colorado Springs Company was formed and the railroad between Denver and the new town was completed. On October 26th, the first train made the trip, carrying many local dignitaries. The trip took five hours at 15 MPH. Regular service began on January 1, 1872.

Littleton was listed as a stop for three trains on the first D & RG time table. Littleton's growth continued, indirectly affected by the state-wide population increase encouraged by further railroad construction. However, the real impetus for the expansion of Littleton came a few years later:

> On February 10, 1889, the first schedule for a new Denver and Rio Grande run took effect. This was a small commuter or "suburban" train called the Uncle Sam. It had been scheduled mainly to service the new military post at Fort Logan with easy access to Denver. With little inconvenience to the railroad the line was extended as far as Littleton. Initial service provided four trains per day in each direction. This number added to seven other first class passenger trains stopping in each direction every day in Littleton made it quite convenient and quite inexpensive to get back and forth to Denver (40 minutes one way at 25¢ a round trip). The run was extremely successful and the number of trips was increased to five per day and eventually included a late night theater train. A person could now live in rural Littleton and yet shop and find entertainment in sophisticated Denver. (Nippert 1974, p.22).

The service provided by the D & RG, coupled with that of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, which completed its line through Littleton in 1887, stimulated the growth of a suburban movement. Wealthy Denverites retreated to the Littleton area, building substantial brick houses. The 1890s through the first decades of the 20th century saw the growth of manufacturing, merchandising, and the trades in the small town, also made possible by the railroads.

The Littleton Denver and Rio Grande Western Depot may also have served the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe in its early years. Before the AT & SF completed its own line, it contracted with the D & RG to use its tracks from 1881 to 1887, and the Littleton AT & SF Depot was constructed in 1888. The D & RGW Depot ended its service as a railroad depot on December 31, 1981. It was being used at that time as a freight depot and as the office of an agent-operator, who relayed operating information to the trains. In this capacity it once again served both the D & RGW and the AT & SF railroads in recent years. Passenger service at this location terminated in 1967.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This native rhyolite stone structure is an example of a particularly fine small railroad depot.

2. Condition of fabric: good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original one-story rectangular stone structure, excluding the additions, measures approximately 24 feet by 40 feet. Including the baggageroom and breezeway additions, the overall dimensions are approximately 24 feet by 94 feet. The lean-to addition is approximately 5 feet by 10 feet.

2. Foundations: The foundation of the stone portion is rusticated blocks of rhyolite. The foundation of the additions is concrete.

3. Walls: The walls of the stone portion are of rusticated blocks of grey rhyolite, with some red sandstone trim interspersed. (Currently, the stone is painted, so the pattern is indistinguishable.) The blocks are laid in a plain coursed ashlar pattern with beaded mortar joints. The stone is tooled on the corners of the building and the top edge of the bottom course to create a water table. The exterior wall surface of the additions is Portland cement plaster on metal wire lath. The walls are now painted white.

4. Structural system, framing: The stone portion consists of solid masonry wall construction with a roof structure of large timber trusses. The additions are of wood frame construction.

5. Stoops: There are no stoops. However, on the west side of the building is a concrete apron with two concrete steps at each door. There is a wooden loading dock on the east side of the baggage room.

6. Chimneys: There is one small brick chimney extending through the roof of the stone building slightly north and west of center. Two small metal vents also project from the east slope of the roof.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two doorways on the west facade of the stone building. The one in the north half of the facade was evidentally the original main entrance. It has been altered

and made smaller by filling in the transom and skylights. The fill material seems to be concrete attempting to match the texture of the stone surface. The transom of the second door, on the south end of the facade, has also been filled in. The original pediment-shaped stone lintels remain. Both doors are wooden with three horizontal panels in the lower half and glass above. Like the rest of the exterior woodwork, the doors are painted light green. The baggage room addition has four freight doors, two on the west facade and two on the east. These doors are wooden, with matched beaded diagonal siding. Beveled stiles and rails divide the doors into six equal panels. A matching freight door is located on the west facade of the enclosed breezeway.

b. Windows: Slightly south of center on the west facade of the stone building is a three-sided bay with three windows. These have been shortened from the top like the doors described above. The sills and flat lintels are of stone. The windows are double-hung sash-type with two over two lights, divided horizontally. There is also one large window on the north end of the stone facade, which appears to maintain its original size. It consists of a double-hung, one over one sash. On the south facade are two symmetrically placed windows, similar to those in the bay. These openings have also been shortened, but the pediment-shaped stone lintels remain. A third, newer, single-light window is located on the west end of the facade. In the gable on both the south and north facades is a small round window. The east facade of the stone building has three windows. The two southern ones have been shortened from the top and consist of double-hung, two over two sash-type windows. The northern window, like its counterpart on the west facade is one over one and maintains its original shape. In addition, the lean-to contains two small four-light windows. The north additions contain three small windows. One horizontal window with five lights is located at the top center of the south facade of the baggage room. Another small six-light window is on the south end of the west facade of the enclosed breezeway. The last, a similar six-light window, is located in the center of the east facade of the breezeway.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The stone building has a gable roof with a large overhang. It is covered with

corrugated sheet metal which has been painted. The small lean-to addition on the east side which houses the lavatories has a shed roof extending from the roof on the main structure. The baggage room has a low hipped roof, and the breezeway addition has a low gable roof. Both of these are covered with rolled asphalt roofing.

b. Cornice, eaves: On the stone building there are wide, overhanging open eaves with beaded wooden siding covering the underside. Small tooled stone corbels support large decorative wooden brackets. The brackets are molded and feature acorn-shaped pendants extending from the middle. The baggage room and breezeway additions also have wide, overhanging open eaves, but without brackets. The underside is covered with beaded wood siding, and there is a simplified wooden frieze below.

c. Other features: There is a communications pole in front of the bay on the west side of the stone building which extends from the ground through the roof. The semaphore which used to be on top of the pole is gone.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The plan of the existing structure consists of four basic parts: the stone portion, the the enclosed breezeway, the baggage room, and the lean-to addition. The stone portion is currently divided into two rooms: the agent's office on the south and a smaller room north of the bay. The doorway between the two rooms is at the east end of the wall. Just west of the doorway is a grated ticket window. On the east wall of the northern room are two doors leading to two small lavatories. In the center of the north wall is a doorway leading to the enclosed breezeway, which is undivided. Slightly west of center on the north wall of the breezeway addition is a door leading to the baggage room. In the northeast corner of the baggage room is a small storage room entered from the south. All the rooms in the existing depot are on one floor; there is no cellar.

2. Flooring: The floor in the stone portion appears to be 3-inch wide southern yellow pine tongue-and-groove flooring covered with linoleum. The breezeway has a concrete floor, and the baggage room has a floor of heavy wooden planks.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls in the stone building are covered with sheetrock. This is true also for the

breezeway and lean-to, except for the south wall of the breezeway and the west wall of the lean-to, where the original exterior stone is exposed. The walls of the baggage room are covered with wide unpainted planks of wood. The ceiling of the stone building is plaster. The ceiling in the breezeway is beaded wooden siding. In the baggage room there is no ceiling, just open roof framing.

4. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: In the stone building the original casings and moldings are missing. The door between the two rooms has two panels. The lavatory doors have six equal panels, and the door leading from the stone building to the breezeway has one panel below and glass above. The door between the breezeway and the baggage room has five equal panels. All of these doors have plain flat wooden frames. The exterior doors are described above. The southern pedestrian door is now the main entrance to the agent's office. The northern pedestrian door leads to the north room of the stone building. There is one freight door on the west wall of the breezeway, and the four others are in the baggage room. The northeast door in the baggage room is now half obscurred by the storage room. The freight doors are made of diagonal beaded siding.

   b. Windows: The south room of the stone building includes the bay and the south facade windows described above. It also includes the two southern windows on the east facade. These windows have no frames but do have wooden sills. In addition, there is a ticket window grate west of the door separating the two rooms. The north room of the stone building contains the two large windows, one on the east and one on the west wall. Each of the lavatories has one small, high window. The breezeway has two small windows, one south of the freight door on the west wall and the other in the center of the east wall. These have flat, plain wooden frames. The baggage room has one window, in the center of the north wall.

5. Decorative features and trim: The interior of the stone building is very plain and devoid of ornamentation. However, there is some cabinetry in the southernmost room. There is an entry counter with a picket gate in the southeast corner of the room, a built-in desk in the bay, and a storage cabinet/counter along the north wall. The cabinetry is plain wood, without trim,

and the counter tops are covered with masonite. The rooms themselves have flat, wooden baseboards. The enclosed breezeway has a few more decorative features. On the north wall and part of the east wall there are molded wooden baseboards, dado strip, and ceiling board. Also there are square box columns, two on the north wall and two on the south, which support two boxed beams running the length of the room. The columns have modified Doric capitals.

6. Mechanical equipment:

   a. Heating: Currently, there is one gas space heater in the southernmost room and another in the enclosed breezeway.

   b. Lighting: There are overhead florescent lights in the stone building and the breezeway. The lavatories, baggage room, and store room have overhead incandescent lights.

   c. Plumbing: There is a commode and a sink in each of the two lavatories. There is also a drinking fountain on the east wall of the northern room of the stone building.

   d. Communications: In the southernmost room is a signal board and track indicator used by the railroad agent.

D. Site: The depot is oriented to the west-northwest, facing the D & RGW tracks which are located approximately 25 feet from the building. On the opposite side of the depot, approximately 70 feet away, are the AT & SF tracks, which run parallel to the D & RGW in this vicinity. Two small unpaved areas on either end of the building are used for parking. Access is from Littleton Boulevard, which is about 70 feet to the south of the depot. There is no landscaping around the building.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: Plans dated December 28-31, 1906, detailing additions and modifications to the depot, are currently kept at the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company Engineering Department, 1515 Arapahoe Street, Denver, Colorado.

B. Early Views: Several photographs and negatives of the depot from circa 1899 to circa 1928 are available at the Littleton Historical Museum, 6028 South Gallup Street, Littleton, Colorado.

C. Interviews: Notes from the following interviews are in the historical project files, Colorado Department of Highways Impact Evaluation Branch, 4201 East Arkansas Avenue, Denver, Colorado.

Davis, Richard E. Interviews April 12 and 14, 1982.

Thode, J. C. Interviews September 24, 1979, and November 29, 1979.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Besides the sources listed above, other references are:

Denver. Colorado Historical Society. Colorado Preservation Office. State historic inventory files.

Denver. Colorado Historical Society. Documentary Resources Department. Collection #513. Denver & Rio Grande Railway Co. Reports to the Stockholders.

Denver. Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Engineering Department. Record of Property Changes - "Structural Units."

Littleton. Littleton Historical Museum. Historic Building Record and Evaluation File #14.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Athearn, Robert G. The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad: Rebel of the Rockies. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962.

Hafen, LeRoy R., ed. Colorado and Its People: A Narrative and Topical History of the Centennial State. Vols. 1 & 2. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948.

Nippert, Stephen. An Architectural and Historic Building Survey: Inventory and Evaluation of Littleton, Colorado, Phase II. Littleton: Littleton Area Historical Museum, 1974.

Smiley, Jerome C. History of Denver. Denver: Old Americana Publishing Co., 1901.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Local newspapers, federal court records.

F. Supplemental Material: None

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Colorado Dept. of Highways
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PART 1V: PROJECT INFORMATION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead agency in charge of Project 1XMU 0075(5): Littleton Railroad Depression, which provides for the open cut depression of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad tracks through the downtown area of the City of Littleton. The primary intent of the undertaking is to eliminate the rail/auto conflicts in the downtown Littleton area. The Littleton Denver and Rio Grande Western Depot, which has been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, is currently situated on land which is included in the project corridor. In order to mitigate the adverse effects and avoid demolition, plans have been developed to relocate the original stone portion of the depot and provide for its rehabilitation and maintenance. A Memorandum of Agreement has been signed by the Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Chairman and the Executive Director of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Among the stipulations agreed to was the provision to record the depot so that there will be a permanent record of its present architectural configuration. All documentation must be accepted by the National Architectural and Engineering Record prior to relocation of the depot. Preparation of the documents was completed by the Impact Evaluation Branch of the Colorado Department of Highways in Denver on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration in March-April, 1982. Historic research and written documentation was prepared by Vicki A. Rottman, Staff Historian; photographs were taken by Paul R. Murillo, Principal Graphic Designer.